A

LETTER

TO

MR. NICHOLAS CHESTER,

IN ANSWER TO HIS DOGMATICAL ONE,

ADDRESSED TO THE

REV. GEORGE STREBECK:

WHEREIN HIS DOCTRINE OF

UNIVERSAL RESTORATION,

IS SCRIPTURALLY REFUTED;

And the Doctrine of the

ETERNITY OF HELL TORMENTS,

PROVED FROM SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY.

BY A STUDENT.

By Alex. Gunn, Student of Columbia College

.....Exempta juvat spinis e pluribus una.
Hor. Ep. 2. l. 12. v. 212.
Better one thorn pluck'd out, than all remain.

New-York:

PRINTED BY L. NICHOLS,

FOR THE AUTHOR.

1803.

A

LETTER

TO

NICHOLAS CHESTER.

SIR,

HOWEVER just and suitable your remarks may be, on the late conduct of Mr. STREBECK towards the Universalists; your own, in vindication of their doctrine, is, I think, no less inconsistent with the rules of candor and politeness. Were you a preacher of universalism, there would probably be no room for censure; but, since this is not the case, you appear to me to have seized this opportunity, not with a candid view to detect error, and remove the thick mist of ignorance; (which, according to your sentiments, from the foundation of the world, has blinded a great part of mankind) but, as a subterfuge

for extolling your own abilities. It was their peculiar business, and, if I mistake not, they did attempt it, to shew the absurdity of his reasonings and wherein he was erroneous. But you have usurped their prerogative, and by so doing, intimated that their abilities were incompatible with the undertaking. This cannot be considered less than a public insult, although cloaked under colors of the greatest esteem for their doctrine. You may, at first, think me deserving of the same reprimand; but, I trust, the reasons I shall give will be deemed sufficient to justify me. It is not intended to assist or vindicate Mr. STREBECK by any means; for, I frankly declare we differ both in profession and sentiment. But, considering the pernicious tendency of your letter, I do it with a design to shew the fallacy of your arguments; which, appear to me investigated, not so much for the purpose of falsifying his doctrine, as to the more permanent establishment of your own: Likewise, finding that neither Mr. STREBECK, nor any other person attempted to answer you: probably, unwilling to kindle afresh the fire of discord and contention, for which, you yourself, Sir, have furnished fuel; I judged it not only expedient, but a duty incumbent upon me. There is one thing more to be re-

marked. I have waited some time, for Mr. STREBECK's ambition to animate him in his own defence; I have not unadvisedly ushered my epistle into the world, as you did; whilst, the Universalists were sounding his arguments and endeavoring to obviate their influence. Upon these considerations, I have engaged in the task; although, it may be thought presumption and arrogance in a student; to suppose that his abilities are equivalent to a subject of so great importance.

The first argument you have advanced is; "that, John the Baptist, when he asked the Pharisees and Saducees, who had warned them to flee from the wrath to come, had no view to eternal wrath; but, pointed wholly to that period when Jerusalem was to be destroyed." This will appear unfounded and unreasonable, upon a consideration of the subsequent verses; especially, of the twelfth: where, he illustrates the nature of this wrath as follows: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." According to your interpretation, by the wheat he must mean the inhabitants; and, by the chaff the city of Jerusalem; which he

would destroy by a fire unquenchable. I would, sir, enquire whether the city of Jerusalem, is now burning with a fire unextinguishable? "Thus, sir, the argument you adduce here is proved to be like the spider's web, ingeniously wrought, but soon destroyed;" therefore, the passage, Mr. STREBECK chose, was well suited to his purpose, and the choice, by no means, "incomprehensible." In the 7th page, you assert by interrogation, that, "God kept back the revelation of his mind, from the patriarchs, and prophets, not excluding John the Baptist, and commissioned them to speak no farther of the punishment of sinners, than in the present world." And you ask, whether "there is one proof in the Old Testament, of the doctrine of *eternal damnation* in fire and brimstone." John the Baptist, must certainly have been privy to it; since your exposition of his denunciation is a sophism. The ancient prophets likewise were conscious of it: although, they may not express it in language so declarative of it. Neither, do I believe, that the fire signified in scripture will be any thing more, than the extreme remorse of conscience. In Isaiah 33 Chap. xiv. and xv. verses, the prophet speaks of the threatening of God, and of his everlasting

anger towards sinners; "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Thus, I would paraphrase this in connection with the 15th verse. On whom, will God inflict *eternal* punishment? On whom, shall his everlasting vengeance be poured out? but, on these hypocrites and sinners. For, "he" *only* "that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he *only*, shall dwell on high." Jeremiah 20 chap. 11 v. "But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore, my persecutors shall stumble and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for, they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." 23 chap. 40 v. of the same book. "And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten." These passages evidently answer your query. Read the verses in their connection; notice to whom those threatnings are made; and unless, you be a man devoid of under-

standing, you must see, that God denounced to those sinners *eternal* separation from his presence. Whether, in fire or brimstone, I know not, but, certainly, everlasting misery, perpetual shame, would overtake them; not in this life, for this is finite; but, in the world to come. If, these are not satisfactory, I will advance one more out of Isaiah, 38 chap. 18 v. "For, the grave cannot praise thee: death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit, cannot hope for thy truth." Thus, you see, sir, you have daringly and presumingly endeavored to prove the *Great God of Heaven* a liar; when he has declared eternal damnation in the New Testament, you say, there is no mention made of it in the old; that is, there is no passage significant of eternal banishment from his presence. I might select many more, but, I deem these sufficient to shew you your error. I, therefore, pass on to your next observation; "If thou doest (these things) thou shalt live;" "if thou doest not (these things) thou shalt die;" you say, "is the general tenor, of the ancient promises and threatenings; and never, were construed to extend beyond limited punishment, until priest-craft began to be instituted in the world." In another place; "That God did not pour out his

curses, on our first parents, but cursed the serpent and the ground for the sake of man." And, until, you dismiss your observations on the Old Testament, you strive scripturally to prove the doctrine of temporal punishment; that is—afflictions, sorrows, and calamities await sinners in this life only, as chastisements for their sins and disobedience. Now, Sir, who upon reflection, can read these as they stand in relation to your favorite topic, and not see a complete inconsistency, and total rejection of a Savior; as superfluous and answering no purpose whatever. It appears to me, that even death, which was denounced upon Adam, was a curse; and evidently must be so, if it signifies affliction, torment, evil. I shall, therefore, in order to sap the foundation, on which you afterwards build your whole system of Universalism, and thereby corrupt the true meaning of scripture with sophistical expatiations; show, the incongruity of the preceding arguments. That you believe death, which separates the soul from the body, to be the last punishment inflicted upon the wicked, is certain, from what you advance to prove that, "anciently warnings against sin, extended only to the subject of temporal punishments." In speaking of temporal punish-

ments, you doubtless mean the present life alone, therefore, in the 12th page, referring to the destruction of the old world, you say, that all those, who were then destroyed, "forfeited by their transgressions, temporal life." In the 14th page, where, you quote Exodus 19 Chap. 10 and 13 verses, you likewise assert, that a temporal death, was the punishment denounced against those, who touched the mount. Hence it is, I conclude, you refer to that death, which is common to all men: not to a punishment, after the disunion of the body and soul, metaphorically styled death in scripture. In several other quotations, sentiments and expositions, it appears to be wholly your design to evince from scripture, that no punishment after death, awaits the wicked; that troubles of the mind, diseases of the body, losses of property, of relatives and friends, anxiety, pestilence and famine, together with the forfeiture of temporal life, the greatest of all punishments, are only threatened against those who work wickedness. I proceed to make a few observations on the hypothesis. If we believe the Bible to be really the word of God, we must likewise believe, that what he has revealed in one part, cannot be contradicted in another; but, if they should not

happen to accord to the satisfaction of man; it must be, through some false construction or blind reasoning. Now, Sir, if mankind are not to suffer punishment hereafter; I mean, if this declaration is made any where in sacred writ, the whole must intimate the same thing; and so on, if finite or eternal. The question is then, whether by the first threatening, we are to understand merely the extinction of the body—a finite or everlasting punishment? "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" is the first threatening, in case of disobedience. We have it written, he did eat; and provoked his maker to anger; so that the Almighty displayed his great displeasure against Eve, in causing her to bring forth in sorrow; and Adam by excluding him from Paradise, to drag out his existence in misery and toil. But, these misfortunes, are not specified in the denunciation;—he was only to die—die how? To holiness, be stript of his earthly tabernacle, or eternally separated from his maker? They must have been included; the continuation of them evinces it; and they are doubtless, intended to afford us some idea of the dreadful effects of God's indignation, upon the soul after death. I grant, that sin was the cause of death, as the Apostle saith, "By

sin, came death, and, so death passed upon all men ;" but, I deny, that this is the last manifestation of God's wrath towards sinners. The Savior expressly says, "He that believeth shall be saved." Saved from what? Afflictions, persecutions, sorrows, annoyances, anxieties, and the like? No. Psalms LXXIII. iii. & v. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked : they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." Jeremiah, XII chapter, i. verse. Wherefore, are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" He that believeth in the Savior, and confesseth him before men, must expect to suffer all these things. On the contrary, it appears that they, who are the most wicked ; who openly rebel against their maker ; who indulge their sensual appetites ; who dissipate their estates in the obscene receptacles of debauchery ; who overreach their neighbors ; who defraud, steal, &c. enjoy the greatest of earthly happiness. Therefore, Sir, if sinners in this life, are happy in a superior degree to christians ; how is it, that afflictions and death are their only punishments? Agreeable to this sentiment, they endure no chastisement whatever except death ; they live a life of felicity here

and an eternity with God hereafter. If this is true, positively, Sir, it would be more conducive to man's temporal welfare, to be a downright Atheist than a Christian. If afflictions in this life, were to be understood as included in the threatening "thou shalt die;" so may eternal death likewise. Suppose that the keen pangs of death are the last chastisements for sin; where then would be the need of a Savior? He came to save those who are righteous, from the wrath of God, and reconcile them to his favor. I know not, that Christians, more than other men are delivered from the dark valley and shadow of death, and taken up into heaven, cloathed in their original corruption. But, this I know, they all undergo the tortures of a dying bed; and indiscriminately, are laid in the earth to wait the just scrutiny of that God to whom they are accountable for every action. Pray, Sir, why has God appointed a day, in which he will judge all the inhabitants of the earth? Is it to be merely a farce? certainly; and, not only this, but it will be unjust for God to summon before his tribunal, to discriminate their merits; to reward some, to chastise others, even finitely, whom he before had examined and corrected according to their deserts. O infatuated mortals! what

can you not devise? what will not your licentious views urge you to investigate, and constitute as principles? how deluded! how vain! how presumptuous! although you have endeavored so vehemently, to prove that men are only the subjects of temporal punishments; yet, in the 21st page of your letter, you acknowledge that there will be a future punishment for those who wilfully reject the Savior. Wonderful condescension indeed! Finding it inconsistent with reason, and contrary to the dictates of conscience, you will disbelieve what the bible says in your opinion, to cide with some party; or, that you may enjoy this life more comfortably, to remove those fears and perplexities of mind, which of course would ensue, if you expected all the punishment you merited for your disobedience in this life. Since, it is no where expressed, that sinners are only to be punished in this life; since, it is repugnant to reason and the terms on which a Savior is tendered to mankind; the doubt must lie now between a finite or eternal punishment. Relative to a finite punishment after death, I know of no single passage in the whole word of God, that gives the least hint upon the subject; therefore, it cannot be substantiated by reason. It may appear probable to those of

weak minds, when " beclouded with sophistry," rendered uintelligible by a collection of technical phrases, and moving to the affections with insinuating language, and a feigned belief of the universal love of God without his justice. It is utterly impossible for man, either to increase or diminish what God has decreed; then, Sir, you must be an unbeliever, (or in common language, an infidel,) if you really think what you have quoted from the old testament, your interpretations and arguments to evince that sinners are only the objects of temporal punishments are fictions. This is evident, from your acknowledgment of finite punishment after death; for which, you cannot, and for which, you yourself partly intimate as having no authority. Hence, it is so clearly manifest to every considerate mind, that you have perverted the plain meaning of the old testament, that you, instead of proving universal restoration, have endeavored to make one part of scripture contradict the other; you have no reason to hope, but every other quotation, explanation and argument will be suspected as having the same " false glossary and perversion." It would be reasonable to suppose, you had disgraced you cause; that your whole system would be annulled, after hav-

ing made so many palpable and irretrievable blunders. To proceed—If both your hypothesis are unfounded by the preceding observations, eternal death must unquestionably be the truth ; a truth, expressly declared by God—by his prophets ; by Christ—and by his Apostles. You cannot adduce one passage, where either of your principles are explicitly laid down ; but that of eternal banishment from the presence of God, is as clearly and literally declared, as language will allow any construction whatever to be. Your sentiments, so diametrically opposite to reason and truth, must be derived more from supposition, than the real and intrinsic signification of scripture, through an inclination of equalising nature with the essence of a God of purity. You probably first conjecture one to signify thus—then, rather than loose such a pleasing and suitable notion, you cavil at the original, 'till you discover something, be it never so foreign, that may a little favor your design ; so by removing conjunctions ;* by transmuting and perverting sentences, you make it appear to illiterate persons ; who perhaps, never so much as look in a bible ; but in preference inclining to deism, to be a doctrine instituted and authorised by God.

See Page 30.

Indeed, Sir, your doctrine, appears to me to bear a near resemblance, if not equally as deceiving and insinuating as that of the serpent's to Eve: saying "thou shalt not surely die." That your whole system, is opposed to the conditions on which a Savior is offered to the world, is evident; for allowing that sinners are destined to a future punishment; that is, to a finite one; those who reject the Savior, trample upon his laws and commit the greatest moral ill in this life, would in a short time, after enduring a few tortures, be saved. Could the Savior, have any part in preserving those souls? You say, he came to save all mankind. He might well say, with himself; I have condescended to dwell with men; to be persecuted, spit upon, ridiculed and buffeted; I have bled and died; groaned under the heavy yoke of oppression; suffered myself to be crucified and put to death by impious hands, to rescue their souls from the fiery indignation of Almighty God; and to no purpose. They can be saved without me. God has been displeased with my humiliation, and conduct in the world; he has resolved to freely pardon their wickedness without attonement, and receive them into everlasting happiness: that theymay deride my impotence,

and treat with contempt that absolute power, I once professed, Almighty God had invested in me. Many are denying themselves the indulgences of their natural propensities, dejecting their minds; wasting their constitutions with continual fasts. Many through the fears of an eternal punishment, precipitating themselves to the commission of the most presposterous crimes; others deluged with the turbulent waters of God's wrath, are thrown into a state of insanity, from which they seldom recover, and often prove their own destroyers; either by intoxication or immediate death. They had better indulge their appetites, carouse in the pleasures of sensuality, and exhilirate their hearts to the fullest of their wishes in this life, than punish themselves forty years, when in a future state they would at most perhaps suffer but twenty. Similar to this sir, were your system true, would probably be the recapitulation of the Savior. But, it may be said, that God at first ordained them to *eternal damnation;* and for this reason came Christ into the world to preserve them from that state of endless misery, by inflicting only a finite punishment on those who wilfully reject him. If this is your argument, it strikes my mind, that their sin of

non-compliance with the Savior, would merit, if it were possible, a two-fold eternity of misery, and dispel every appearance of compassion from the tribunal of a God of justice. It would be the highest injustice in a God, having decreed endless pain in the first place to sinners; then to allow such, who despise his terms of mercy, after a small degree of punishment, to participate of the same happiness with those, who denied themselves, in a state of nature every indulgence, to acquire. I trust, this is sufficient, since neither temporal nor finite punishment after death, are expressly declared to be the fate of sinners; and since they are incongruous with the offers of salvation, to prove, that an everlasting one must unquestionably be the truth, if we believe that God would not at one time decree temporal death, and at another eternal. I proceed now to consider a few of your observations on the new testament. In the 22 page, you undertake to define the nature of sin, whether it be of a finite or infinite principle: "For, if sin" you say, "be but a finite evil, the conclusion would be undeniably correct, that it would be unjust in God to punish the sinner *eternally* for his finite offences." Allowing it to be a finite principle; the argument, when well

considered, will indubitably shew that sinners merit *everlasting punishment* from scripture, whether it can be reconciled by reason or not. Is man to make every part of scripture, and the plans of God compatible with reason? why does he not render consistent that of the resurrection! Indeed sir, I doubt much, whether you would even believe in *universal restoration* if you attempted to comprehend, in your shallow capacity, the boundless purposes of heaven. Therefore, sir, if we believe that the mind of man, is at present too narrow and contracted, his reason falsified, and his inclinations corrupted; can we suppose he is a proper being to examine the schemes of his maker? certainly not. It is more rational then, to yield strict obedience to what is most plainly commanded concerning his future state, and subject to reason only, those of his own formation. You say "that finite sins, must first be proved to positively affect, injure, wrong, disturb, annoy or destroy some infinite principle, before the problem can be solved." I would enquire what you mean by "some infinite principle? it appears to me, there is but one, the deity himself; therefore, it would be absurd to say, that sin destroyed the Deity; consequently I understand you

mean the soul, although there is a manifest contradiction. If I can positively show that sin has destroyed the soul, from scripture, you must either give up your argument or deny the bible. Let us then, for a moment, refer to those wicked spirits, the devils, on whom God has decreed everlasting punishment. Do we not here see that sin positively affected, injured, wronged, disturbed, annoyed and destroyed the infinite principle, (as you term it) or soul in them? certainly. Did God create two spirits, an evil and a good? If we say thus, we must of necessity attribute all sin to God, as the author and creator of it. No, sin destroyed the good spirit, corrupted it, rendered it wholly evil, devoid of purity, holiness and love. How, sir, is this to be reconciled? the devils most undoubtedly are to suffer eternally in hell. Sin was here finite, and are they to be punished infinitely? or do you really think the devils will participate of happiness? If your extravagance extends thus far, I will select a passage or two to convince you of your error. Rev. 20 chap. v. 10, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophets are; and shall be tormented day and night, for-

ever and ever." 21 chap. v. 8; "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The devil in scripture is styled the father of lies. The first death, I conceive to be that which destroys the body; the second that which destroys the soul, or eternally separates it from God, and commences after judgment. It is an absurdity to suppose, that the devil who goes about seeking whom he may devour; who strives to destroy the kingdom of the Redeemer, and who greatly strove to ruin the Redeemer himself could ever have had any hope of being saved by him. This is manifestly contradictory.

To return. God instilled the same happy spirit in man; made him a being like unto himself, and gave him a settlement in paradise; but the serpent tempting Eve, and she tempting Adam, introduced sin into the world; by this means, that pure, undefiled spirit of Adam became a recepticle of sorrow and misery. Certainly, sir, no man in his senses can consider of the dreadful catastrophe of the devils, and believe that God,

without a Savior, would permit any human being to escape with only a finite punishment: when he had wilfully transgressed the laws of his maker. This is sufficient to shew that though sin is of a finite principle, yet it cannot prevent man from being the object of God's eternal wrath; since, his awful justice is so clearly seen in chastising the devils. Can we suppose that man on account of his nature, or any particular services, deserves more compassion from God, than devils? No, not if we reflect that the latter, previous to their fall, stood in a nearer relation to God. Since Christ came in the flesh to save men, they must be made vessels of salvation in the flesh; or else they never can be hereafter; neither have we any scripture to assure us of it, any more than that of the devils. John 8 chap. v. 21, "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." "As the tree falls so it lies." Mark 3 chap. v. 29; "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath *never* forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." It is probable that this sin has been committed; therefore, agreeable to the declaration of our Savior, the culprit can never be pardoned; and your whole system must

of course be demolished. In the first quotation, whatever you may think, I do not conceive he meant, "whither I go, ye shall come," And to prove we are to understand the Savior by his words, read Num. 23 chap. v. 19, "God is not man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Likewise, in the 13 chap. of Luke from the 23 to the 27 verses, Christ himself informs us, he will shut the door against some and they shall not be able to enter in. Luke 16 chap. v. 26, affords us great argument, which you in page 40, endeavor to do away, with a long train of frivolous exposition, and sophistical mist. "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from thence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." I will just remark here, that your ignorance may be discovered; the explanation you give of this passage, in your observations on the parable of Dives and Lazarus. "The great gulph mentioned, by Abraham means *their* unbelief, which is the occasion of their separation; and by referring to Moses and the prophets, directs their attention to them,

who all gave testimony of the Messiah, whom the Pharisees rejected." Pray, sir, did Abraham address himself to one or more persons in the parable? doubtless you will answer, if candid, one. How happens it then that in your interpretation, it was the gulph of *unbelief* which separated the Pharisees from Christ? Were all the Pharisees in hell? or had the rich man only to send for a bible, that while in hell he might turn to Moses and the prophets, to learn the conditions on which he might receive a Savior? In the 32 page you enlarge much on these words, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." "We cannot consider a fire to be quenched" you say "when having consumed the things which are the subjects of its power, it extinguishes itself," this you infer was the obvious meaning of our Savior; and in the 34 page "you do not deny that the upbraiding conscience of the damned, will with unutterable anguish prey upon the heart; that through *aionion punishment*, the gnawings thereof will be inconceivably dreadful; but, when I consider" you say, "this figure, pointing to the worms, which continually preyed on the dead carcases in the valley, there is not eternal duration to be collected from it; they could exist no longer than the

matter on which they preyed continued; or 'till the fire intended to destroy and purify, totally checked their gnawings." Can we imagine our Savior would be so deceitful, as to mean finite, in words so expressive of *eternal punishment?* Can we believe and follow the dictates of reason, he meant the fire will cease of itself, in saying it is not quenched? Indeed sir, if this, which you imagine, is true, his sayings must be treacherous; intended to deceive mankind and to fill them with a servile terror, which is hardly tolerable in earthly potentates, much less in the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Certainly sir, he could not have completed the mission on which he was sent, with justice and truth, in denouncing to the world the awful effects of God's *wrath*, when he really meant his inexpressible *compassion and love;* the former of which, mankind in general, for eighteen centuries, have understood to signify *eternal damnation;* but a few modern superior geniuses have lately discovered it to be *universal salvation!!* Such interruptions, are sufficient to give men a detestation of the gospel; and to prove it "a cunningly devised fable." The comparison you last made, is certainly very unjust; for the soul is an immortal spirit, which cannot be des-

troyed by fire; neither can the fire, check the gnawings of the worm upon it. You intimate, as if fire would purify the soul, and render it capable of enjoying felicity; but this is unscriptural. The Savior, if the fire of hell purged away sin, would have no part in saving the soul; therefore, it is evident you put no faith in the Savior, after it has once reached that place of torment, but in the excrutiating and destructive power of the fire. Page 41, you quote Ephesians, 1 chap. 9 and 10 verses. "Having made known unto us, the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him;" which you interpret thus: "by the gathering together all things in one, must be understood the union of all things under one head, even Christ Jesus the second man, the Lord from heaven, whom Abraham did believe would bless all nations, according to God's promise and oath, and not consign any soul to endless punishment." But you do not remember that the apostle had heretofore been speaking of election; for as he says in the 5th verse, "having predestinat-

ed us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Then follows the application of the 10th verse, " That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together all things," *predestinated* " in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. And in the 2 chap. v. 7, he explains it thus: " that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ;" that is, by the union of all things *fore-ordained* in Christ. In page 44, you suppose to corroborate much your doctrine, by altering the present tense to the past of that passage, which Mr. Strebeck quotes from Hebrews 3 chap. 11 and 18 verses, " So I sware in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest." This he has "swears;" but you after a little sarcasm, endeavor to do away its application to the present time. Pray Sir, is God making new declarations of what he is at present doing? Were not all the threatenings denounced ages ago—in past time, and are they not applicable to the present? In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, you labor to eradicate its true signification, by saying it is a figure; in this you admit no-

thing of the kind. Was not Moses a type of Christ? certainly. In the 7th verse, it is thus written, "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to day, if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation, in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years; wherefore, I was grieved with that generation, and said they do always err in their hearts and they have not known my ways; so I sware in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." "I solemnly sir, call (you say) upon you to prove, where God under the gospel dispensation swears, that any one of his universal family shall not finally enter into his rest." As to this, sir, I have already adduced passages sufficient from the New Testament, to prove that those who despise the Savior, shall never, never, be saved, or enter into his rest. And I in return appeal to every candid mind, whether the exhortation of the apostle does not evidently prove, that if they had in them an evil heart of unbelief, they were in danger of the same threatening. Let the argument

rest as it may in your opinion, it plainly refutes the whole system of *universal restoration.* You acknowledge, page 45, thus; "I remark, this threatening accompanied with the solemn oath of God, his veracity has fulfilled." Then, they have not yet entered into the rest of God, neither can they; and these very children of *Israel* must make a part of those, who can never be saved. God says they shall not be possessed of the promised land, that is, in future—for the time to come. We cannot suppose Canaan to be the settled habitation of God, it must be a type of heaven; so they out of his rest, must be in everlasting misery. In one part you observe, "that the custom of many who have been, and are styled ministers of the gospel, attempting to what is called "spiritualising" the sacred history has introduced a numerous host of false conceptions in the minds of their auditors; "when alas" you say again, "were many of them to exercise their own intellectual faculties, and become students of the scriptures, with minds unshackled from man's expositions, they would find themselves only inferior to their preacher in impudence." I think Sir, were the auditors of the preachers of *universalism,*

or your readers to make themselves acquainted with the languages, and judge for themselves what ought to be, and what ought not to be in the original, they would find themselves superior in learning and common sense. Truly, Sir, I conceive you to be a complete ignoramus, more fond of displaying your skill in the languages, than any thing else, for there is "nothing to be seen but a jumble of dark, absurd, unmeaning, unconnected daubs." Page 48 in assigning the reasons that led you to become a universalist, you speak thus: "nor were my views divested from what are cal- *high calvinistic* doctrines, until I came into this country, when a friend requested me to give the writings of the late Rev. John Fletcher a strict perusal; an examination and consideration of *sentiments* so opposite to those which I had all my life up before concluded orthodox, aroused my mind to the necessity of searching the scriptures with the utmost diligence." By this it evidently appears that you carefully perused his *writings*, in order to ascertain his *sentiments*, which excited *your mind diligently* to search the scriptures, to *examine* the grounds on which they were established and to discover the fallacy of those, to which

you formerly assented. Through what motive, let me ask, Sir, do you in the last page so rashly deny, "having ever read any human author on the universal love of God?" What can be more absurd or self-contradictory? Such, are the arguments you adduce to prove the purity of your doctrine. I leave every candid mind to judge, whether any fidelity can be placed in what you assert; whether principles which must be supported by erroneous and subtle reasonings are worthy of assent, especially in a subject of so great importance as the future state of the soul. I shall omit making any further observations on the latter part of your letter, being foreign to my present design; notwithstanding, it might with the same facility be refuted. That you may speedily come to the knowledge of the truth; that you may see and be conscious of your manifold errors, and have cause to reflect on the mischeivous tendency of your letter, is the ardent prayer of,

Sir,

Your's respectfully,

A STUDENT.

THE

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

NEW-YORK SOCIETY

FOR PROMOTING

CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND

PIETY.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY *LOUDON & BROWER*, WATER-STREET.

—1794.—